

**Meeting Minutes
Cascade Charter Township
Downtown Development Authority
Board of Directors
May 16, 2006
Cascade Museum Building
2839 Thornapple River Dr. SE**

ATTENDEES: Ron Clark, David Huhn, Ray James, Julie Johnson, Mike Julien, Diana Kingsland, Joann Noto, Dan Wallace.

Absences: Lori Chu (expected), Ray James (expected)

Others Attending: Manager Jay Cravens; Admin. Assistant Hern.

Guests: None.

ARTICLE 1: Call the Meeting to Order

Chairman Clark called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

ARTICLE 2: Approval of the Agenda

Chairman Clark requested a motion of approval of the May 16, 2006 DDA Agenda. Member Kingsland motioned for approval, supported by Member Johnson. All in favor of motion, none opposed. Motion carried.

ARTICLE 3: Approval of the Minutes of March 21, 2006

Chairman Clark requested a motion of approval of the March 21st minutes.

Member Huhn motioned for approval of the March 21, 2006 minutes, supported by Member Noto.

Member Johnson noted an addition on Page 1, Under Article 4, 2nd Paragraph after the word “established” add “as Cascade’s first P.U.D.” and continue with the rest of the sentence.

She also noted another correction on Page 4, 2nd full paragraph, the beginning of the paragraph needs to begin with: “Johnson initiated discussion regarding it (Centennial Park) being the first P.U.D. the Township has had and asked if discussion was held....” And keep the remaining part of the sentence.

Member Huhn motioned for approval of the March 21, 2006 DDA Board Minutes with the amendments as noted by Member Johnson, supported by Member Noto. All in favor of the March 21, 2006 Minutes as amended, none opposed. Motion carried.

**ARTICLE 4: Update by Centennial Park Business Owners and Township Staff
Special Assessment Districts**

Manager Cravens began by saying the Centennial Park Business Owners Association were present at the last DDA Meeting to discuss the status of Centennial Park and approached the Board with the possibility of funding a Master Plan for park improvements. Since that meeting, the Association has

met with Staff twice regarding suggestions made by the DDA Board. Township Staff and the Association have also met with Township Attorney, Dick Wendt, to discuss funding options for Centennial Park.

The Association Business Owners are interested in funding a portion of the Master Plan study and would like the DDA to fund the other portion of the study. One suggestion, which would include all the Business Owners, is to create a Special Assessment District (SAD) for the Centennial Park Business Owners. When a SAD is formed, the money for the district can be used for public infrastructure. The Master Plan Study would fall into this category as the study would include improvements such as streets, sidewalks, streetlights, etc. One advantage to forming a SAD is that the amount due becomes a lien on the property and if it is not paid, the amount due is placed on the winter tax bill. The assessment amount can be determined by a couple of different ways. It can be split evenly among property owners or it can be based on the SEV of the property.

Manager Cravens also said another way to collect money for improvements is to form a Business Improvement Zone. This allows for the assessment of properties within a specific zone and permits money to be used for brick and mortar as well as operating costs, maintenance costs, etc. At this time, however, the statute states that a business improvement zone is limited to villages and cities. There would have to be an amendment to allow for the development of a zone in Townships. Until that time, a Special Assessment District is the only option for the Centennial Park Business Owners.

If the Business Owners would like to establish a district, their next step would be to turn in a petition with signatures from fifty-one (51%) percent of the property owners showing interest in creating a district. As mentioned at the previous DDA Meeting, if the Business Owners decide to move forward with a Master Plan Study, RFP's (Requests for Proposals) should take place in September of 2006 with a consultant in place to begin by January 2007.

Staff can help develop and review the language in the petition prior to distribution but the next step is now in their power. The DDA Board said at the last meeting it is willing to fund up to fifty (50%) percent of the plan study and a good relationship is developing and the Township supports the Assessment District.

If an Assessment District is created, the Township Board would have two (2) hearings for developing the Special Assessment District and would include plan approval and approval of the final plans and projects within. The assessment would be granted for one (1) year and the cost of the plan would be approximately \$60,000 - \$70,000 and financially split fifty-fifty between the DDA and the Business Association. Manager Cravens also noted two (2) of the Centennial Park Business Association representatives were present at tonight's meeting.

Chairman Clark invited the Business Association representatives to approach the DDA and George Wanty began by saying the Centennial Park Business Association is composed of high quality business people and they are looking to create a blueprint to the future.

Larry Fleis said the majority of the business owners have approved the plan and are currently trying to identify the areas of the park that need the most help. Wanty said the business owners realize it will be a long-term project but believe in the park and what the businesses have to offer.

Manager Cravens noted that if the Association were to petition, the petition should include the language noting it is for the plan and improvements of Centennial Business Park, both should be stated. He referred to Laraway Lake and the issue in regards to trying to clean up the weeds and could not do so because clean up is considered an improvement and the language of improvements was not included in the Laraway Lake District Assessment, the language was too narrow.

Chairman Clark asked if the DDA was expected to take action on this item this evening and Manager Cravens noted that the Association is indicating they will develop a petition to begin the process of forming a Special Assessment District. If a special meeting is needed for the DDA's input regarding the issue, one (1) could be scheduled between now and the next meeting in August.

Chairman Clark said he is not opposed to scheduling a special DDA meeting to help the Centennial Park Business Association along with their process.

Member Julien said that as a member of the Township Board, he believes the Township Board would like to hear the thoughts of the DDA Board and essentially funding \$35,000 towards the plan.

Chairman Clark asked if the funds are available and Manager Cravens said the DDA captures approximately \$300,000 per year but it is not in the 2006 budget and could be budgeted for 2007.

Member Huhn motioned that the DDA provide up to \$35,000 or fifty-percent (50%) for a portion of the Master Plan Study of the Centennial Park, supported by Member Noto.

Member Johnson asked the Association representatives if they are planning on removing large trees, especially the Maples down Charlevoix Drive and Fleis said they may be trimming some, removing some and they will not know until they have the plan. He read a paragraph from their engineer noting the review of all landscaping. Wanty also commented that the trees are a big part of the park and add character.

Chairman Clark called for approval of the motion with all in favor and none opposed. Motion carried.

Member Julien commented that the next step is the approval of the financial support will go before the Township Board and they will have the final approval of the funds and suggested the Business Association obtain the Township Board's approval prior to the petition. The process for developing a Special Assessment District is very procedural and it is important to follow the steps. Manager Cravens said he would work with Fleis, once the Township Board has approved, in developing the language of the petition.

**ARTICLE 5: Request from the Kent County Senior Millage Committee
Consider Memo**

Manager Cravens said he received a letter from the Kent County Senior Millage Committee requesting the Township waive the right to capture the senior millage. The City of Wyoming and Plainfield Township have already made their decision not to capture Senior Millage funding, making it possible to better meet the needs of the senior citizens in their communities. Staff is recommending the DDA recommend to the Township Board waiving Cascade Township's capture of the funds. He said he could write a letter of waiver noting the future projects of the Township regarding new sidewalks and other earmarked projects planned within the community.

Chairman Clark expressed some concern over the community comparing which millage is important and which is not and noting community projects of improvement would help the waiver. Member Julien said the DDA could change their minds if this were to become a political firestorm and feels the DDA could decline if they capture the improvements to the bike paths, sidewalks, police department, fire department, library and Grand Rapids Community College.

Member Wallace motioned to politely decline the request, supported by Member Noto.

Member Johnson noted the last audit was done in 2004 and asked what the numbers are now for the senior population within the Township. Manager Cravens noted approximately four-percent (4%) and Member Johnson believes this would be a mistake to decline since the seniors do not have any way to make income.

Chairman Clark called for approval of the motion with seven (7) in favor and one (1) opposed. Motion carried.

Manager Cravens said this would be put before the Township Board at next week's meeting.

ARTICLE 6: Any Other Business

Chairman Clark opened the meeting for any other business.

Member Huhn asked who empowers the Special Assessment District and Member Julien said the Association would have numerous steps to go through and could consider charging each business property \$1,000 to help fund the study. If the businesses do not pay their \$1,000, a lien could be placed on the property and the Township would invoice the business. Member Huhn asked if the sidewalks for the park need to become an amendment and Member Julien noted the Association will have to champion this district and if they have the consensus with legal structure, the DDA and Township will provide recommendations.

ARTICLE 7. Chairman Clark requested a motion for adjournment. At 8:06 p.m. Member Johnson motioned for adjournment, supported by Member Wallace.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lisa Hern, Recording Secretary

Approved as to form by:

Jay W. Cravens, Executive Director